World Chronicle

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PREVIEW OF UN MILLENNIUM SUMMIT, SEPTEMBER 2000

Heads of States and/or Government of the Member States of the United Nations will converge on UN Headquarters in New York starting 6 September to participate in the Millennium Summit. It is likely to be the largest single such gathering ever held. The Summit will be a historic opportunity for a fundamental review of the role of, and the challenges facing the United Nations in the 21st century. In this edition of **World Chronicle**, Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, talks about the issues to be discussed at the Millennium Summit.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues.

Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

The serious crises that afflicted humankind in the twentieth century continue into the new century. From conflict to genocide and ethnic cleansing. From abject poverty to AIDS. From the effects of unplanned globalization to climate change. As we reflect on the challenges we face at this millennial milestone, it is also a chance to consider the only global organization to which we can turn: the United Nations. To discuss how to strengthen the role of the world body in the 21st century, the UN General Assembly designated its 55th session, starting early in September 2000, as the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations. The Millennium Summit is likely to be the largest-ever gathering of Heads of State or Government.

Our guest today is deeply involved in the organization of the Millennium events at the UN. She is Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. Joining me to talk with Madam Fréchette are Betsy Pisik of *The Washington Times* and James Bone of *The Times of London*.

Madam Fréchette, welcome to **World Chronicle.**

Ambassador Fréchette -- I may address you as Ambassador because you were the former Ambassador of Canada to the United Nations -- the arrangements for the Summit Session, do you have a bunch of what they call Sherpas working on a communiqué which can be adopted at the end of the session or preparations are being made?

FRECHETTE: Well, the first stage of preparations had focussed very much on the organization of the Summit itself. For the first time we will have a summit that will consist not only of list of speeches by leaders but also interactive sessions where they will actually have an opportunity to have an exchange of views. That's never happened in the UN and the Member States have decided to make this experiment at this Summit in September. On the Secretariat side, we focused our efforts on preparing a report which came out about a month ago, where the Secretary-General presented to the Member States his version of the main challenges facing the international community and what he thinks might be some of their goals and the decisions that they might adopt at the Summit itself.

LITTLEJOHNS: What has been the reaction to the report which included other

proposals, particularly in the economic and technological areas?

FRECHETTE: I think the Report was very well received in every part of the world. The Report places poverty and the needs of people – of individual human beings – very much at the centre of the UN's agenda and this found a very good response everywhere in the world. It has also advanced some ideas on the environment. His feeling is that perhaps we have neglected in recent years problems related to the environment and that the long-term sustainability of human life on the planet requires vigorous action on that. So I think he has managed to really touch a chord with people in every part of the world and I think that is a very good basis for the discussions that are under way in the General Assembly leading to the Summit itself.

LITTLEJOHNS: Now the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle was disrupted -- including the fact that the Secretary-General was unable to deliver his speech there -- and the more recent meetings in Washington of the UN's financial institutions were also the targets of protests. Are you rather afraid that you may have a repetition of that?

FRECHETTE: Well, we hope we are not targets in the same way that the WTO and the World Bank and IMF were. And I think there are a couple of reasons why we think that the environment may be a little different when it comes to the UN. First, in the run up to this Summit, there have been a number of consultations in various parts of the world, involving representatives of civil society. As we speak, there is a forum of NGOs meeting where they will put together their own sort of manifesto for the millennium and I think there is also a much, much longer history of openness in the UN in relationship with members of civil society. A relationship that has been quite productive. And I think NGOs would recognize a lot of their own input in some of the policy decisions that were taken in the UN in the last ten years. So we hope that this very different kind of relationship we have with NGOs and civil society in general will help us to avoid the kind of confrontation that we saw in Seattle and in Washington.

PISIK: A lot of the NGOs are complaining that they have not been able to register or get access to some of these recent events, what sort of role do you expect that civil society will play in this by the time September actually rolls around?

FRECHETTE: First of all, there's quite a long tradition now of access of NGO to major events in the UN system. In fact, two weeks from now, we will have a major conference on women with quite a large number of NGO delegates being registered to

participate in the event. The Summit itself will be a little different in the sense that we will have the largest concentration of leaders assembled in one building in history probably. And as you can well imagine, there are enormous problems of security that have to be addressed. That is why the consultations with the NGOs and civil society will take place before that. There is a forum that is taking place this week then much closer to the event we will have another series of consultations with NGOs towards the end of August. There is also a meeting of speakers of parliaments in the very last days of August. So while the Summit itself will be closed because of security reasons there will have been a lot of contact with NGOs and civil societies in the run up to it.

BONE: We just celebrated the UN's 50th birthday not so long ago, I don't know quite clearly what the point is of having a Millennium Summit.

FRECHETTE: Well, the 50th anniversary was an anniversary. It was a commemoration. It was perhaps looking more into the past, the history, and the Summit itself was a celebration. This one is a working summit. It is designed to lead to a clear sort of agenda, a new agenda being set for the UN by the leaders when they come here in September. It is a working summit. We are not planning any particular kind of celebration or gala. It is really a working summit and that's why the leaders have decided that they want to spend time talking to one another, not only coming here to give speeches.

BONE: One thing I really don't understand is I spent the turn of the millennium, so-called, in Lebanon and of course I was watching Hezbollah TV. It was the TV station there. Of course, there is no mention of that because it's not a Muslim festival too. It's actually a Christian festival the millennium cause it's 2000 years after Christ. Why is it an appropriate thing for the UN to celebrate?

FRECHETTE: I think it's an excuse. I think it's an occasion that the Member States decided to take advantage of. Clearly, this date is significant for some parts of the world. It isn't particularly significant in other parts of the world but it's a nice round number. But I think what is very clear in the minds of everybody is that we are going through a very important period of transformation in terms of economic relations but also political relations around the world. And I think there is a very strong sense which expressed itself in the streets of Seattle and in Washington. There's a strong sense that we as an international community must do a better job of governing together this new phenomenon which really puts us all in the same universe where we depend on one another for our future.

LITTLEJOHNS: You expect 150 or so heads of state or government from Bill Clinton on down, or up as the case may be. Surely you don't expect these people to spend four or five days here in the UN no matter how much they have to discuss?

FRECHETTE: Well, the Summit itself is three days. They will all make a very short statement in the General Assembly, they will all participate in one of the four round tables that will be organized on the occasion of the Summit. But as you can well imagine to have that many leaders assembled is an extraordinary opportunities for bilateral contacts. So like in similar occasion in the past -- indeed every General Assembly sees that same phenomenon -- on the margins of the formal meetings at the Assembly you have a very, very large number -- hundreds and hundreds -- of bilateral meetings between leaders which in themselves frankly sometimes are as important as the Summit itself because here's a neutral space where people can meet and pursue their bilateral ....

LITTLEJOHNS: So we may expect a few problems that have been around for a long time to be suddenly resolved?

FRECHETTE: I certainly would like to see some progress on some of these long-standing issues.

LITTLEJOHNS: Cyprus for example?

FRECHETTE: Oh, who knows? We never know what 's going to happen. Each of these problems have their own dynamics and their own cycle but sometimes events like that can provide a propitious atmosphere for some steps to be taken -- positive steps to occur.

PISIK: The Organization has been going through a lot of soul searching lately to try to figure out what it's role is in the future, particularly in terms of peacekeeping. I wonder in your other expertise as administration and management overseer, can you talk a little bit about what is expected to come out of this in terms of what the future of the UN itself will be? Is there going to be continued concentration on peacekeeping? Will we see anything substantive in reform matters?

FRECHETTE: Well, you know, reform is a word that covers a multitude of realities and processes and changes. I think reform at one level is a continuous process. It means an organization that has to adjust all the time to new realities and if I may refer to the Report of the Secretary-General for a minute, he pointed out that in the future the UN will have to work in much closer partnership with non-state actors. Many of the problems that we

are facing today cannot be resolved just by governments and certainly not by the international organization. That's why increasingly we're seeing new types of partnerships new types of endeavours. Sometimes the UN is in the lead, sometimes it isn't in the lead, but it is a player in the broader group that may involve indeed governments, academics, non-governmental organizations, and increasingly the private sector. So the role of the UN -- I think the UN will continue to be involved in practically every part of human life. Every activity, every sector of human life we will find a correspondence somewhere in the UN system, but I think we will be working differently. In the area of peacekeeping, or peace operations in particular, the operation currently under way in Sierra Leone once again underlines how devoid of means we are to take on these difficult challenges. The Secretary-General has requested that a review be carried out of peace operations and that recommendations be put together to identify where is the strength and our ability to deliver on these peace missions. And I hope that in this year of the millennium that we will see some serious discussion as to what role should the UN really have and what kind of mission we should be taking in the future.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

BONE: I just want to follow up on that. There's a commission as you say studying peacekeeping under Lakdar Brahimi who is a former Foreign Minister from Algeria, who has worked travelled for the UN in several different places. It seems that the UN regularly launches inquiries or reviews of peacekeeping. I mean we had a big thing under Boutrous Ghali which was known as Agenda for Peace, then we had after Somalia and Bosnia and various fiascos in peacekeeping, we had what we call the son of Agenda for Peace which was the same exercise but came to different conclusions. Now we have what we call the grandson of Agenda for Peace. Are these things actually useful? Because the problems are very well-known. The problems repeat themselves and the problems are actually structural because of the problems like the relationship between the UN and the Member States. And in fact, the UN does not have its own army to do what it wants to at will and it does not get properly equipped with troops and it does not get full consent among the parties. These are all very well-known problems. You don't need to be a brain surgeon or even an Under-Secretary-General to understand these problems.

FRECHETTE: First of all, the types of missions in which we now get involved

are different from traditional peacekeeping and we have not been doing these missions for that long. In fact I think it was 1992 that the first new type of mission really was voted by the.....

LITTLEJOHNS: And this was something involving a civil war as so many of them are.

FRECHETTE: That's it. Involving the UN in internal conflict, involving the UN in -- I'm thinking of Cambodia where the mandate was much more to do than just deploying military troops to ensure security but also involved in conducting elections. By now we have a third generation or a new generation of missions in Kosovo and East Timor which have to do with the UN actually administering territories. That happened last year. So a lot ....

BONE: It happened 30 or 40 years ago as well at the UN. This has come back into fashion but these kinds of operations were happening 40 years ago. In Western Irian, in Southeast Asia there was a kind of election process ...

LITTLEJOHNS: Called the Dutch Colony

BONE: Yes. Congo in the early 1960s developed into a civil war. You know, these are not new things. And also these two reports I take it are since the new generation of peacekeeping.

FRECHETTE: It's clear that we did get involved in the past in elections and other pieces of internal activities but if you look at the number of peacekeeping missions or peace operation missions that have been created since 1990, it is twice as many in the last ten years as they were on the first 15 years of existence of the UN. So clearly, there is a new generation. And as we go along, yes, there are problems that are very well-known and not all the solutions have been found. And I think there are very practical things, very practical changes that could be brought to our internal systems that would actually make it possible for us to deliver all these missions somewhat more efficiently. Agenda for Peace was more of a conceptual document. It was a real breakthrough in terms of imagining the type of interventions the UN could do. What you call the son of Agenda for Peace revised that somewhat. What this new panel is going to do is going to have a very practical focus. I think there are a number of things in terms of our financial administration systems, in terms of our personnel administration systems, that should be changed to make us a real field-based organization capable of responding quickly.

PISIK: Actually that is one of the things I wanted to ask you about. For the first time in I think almost 30 years, the UN is starting to look at the way peacekeeping missions are funded. Do you have a sense of if you can look forward just past the Millennium Summit to the end of the General Assembly this year, do you think that they will be establishing these new base lines for funding and is this necessary?

FRECHETTE: I think just under the funding rubric, I think there are many different issues. One is the scale of assessments – how the costs are apportioned among Member States. But that's only one aspect of the funding. There's also the kind of flexibility we are given as to when we can commit funds, how we can commit funds and so on in addition to the adequacy of the budgets that are voted for these operations. So I think there are quite a number of issues just under the rubric funding that have to be addressed more resolutely than in the past. I hope we will see some concrete change, some concrete agreement. I tend to be a realist. I don't expect big bang changes very often. Usually changes are more incremental but I think we are facing a situation where there should be, if not a big bang approach to peacekeeping management in the UN system, at least something more than just little marginal adjustments here and there.

BONE: One of the problem is the UN of course is getting very old now and it's ossified in its structure as of 1945 pretty much, with the Security Council having been expanded modestly but still with the veto powers of the victors of World War II and deadlocked on opening it up or adding new permanent members. That kind of thing. And I wanted to contrast it to the European Union which has a much more dynamic approach where it's always seeking that ever-closer union, it's developing new institutions, it's establishing common currencies, a common defense process which is something the UN doesn't seem to be able to do. The UN is very static and is not dynamic in that way. Is there any way you can change that and in which directions should the UN go if it were able to?

FRECHETTE: I think the comparison is perhaps fair at one level but not so fair at another level. It is one thing for 15 countries that share a common history, common values, common ...

BONE: And shared two wars, of course.

FRECHETTE: Yes, but they have since come a long way. But that's 15 countries that are on the same continent. They're neighbours. They have made a political commitment to work together. It is much more difficult for an organization that now has 188

members with very different levels of development, varying interests, different political situations and, to some extent, different cultures and different values to reach agreement on these structural changes. This being said, changes in structure is not the only measure of change in the UN. There are institutions that have changed very profoundly over the years without the sort of outer structure of the UN to change. It's almost as important I would say to have clear goals and to adjust your substantive focus with the same structure. You can be very different ten years later if you have really changed and adjusted your focus. And I think in various parts of the UN system, if you look closely, in fact you realize that maybe the structure has not changed very much but they are totally different institutions.

BONE: And the personalities change as well.

FRECHETTE: And the personalities change, too.

BONE: Times and the people and the way they work together have changed a lot.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Fréchette, you are the first person ever to be Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. On a personal note, how has this worked out? Has it worked out as you thought it would sort of and exactly what are your responsibilities?

FRECHETTE: It has worked out better than I thought it would in the sense that my role became quite clear quite quickly. I expected many months of uncertainty as to what I would do and how I would work it out with the Secretary-General. In fact, it fell into place almost instantly because it is so obvious that the Secretary-General has to devote 95 percent of his time to managing the crisis of the day, to maintaining relations with the various Member States, including travelling outside. He is the public face of the Organization, he is very much in demand everywhere around the world, including here in the United States that the task of the Deputy became very clear. I was going to be turned towards the inside, I was going to try to make the machine work better, I was going to focus much more on internal administration, management issues. I'm a little of bit of a trouble shooter for him. I'm not a new layer in the administration. Nobody reports to me formally. I step in when a problem needs to be resolved or a system needs to be fixed and then I move on to something else. And it's working very well and I'm enjoying it tremendously.

PISIK: So much of the future of the United Nations and its efficiency depends on its ability to perform the tasks that Member States want it to and that of course means

funding and that of course means the United States and that gets back to Helms/Biden. So I'm wondering if you're a gambling woman what would you say the odds are of the 550 million coming in this year and 300 million next?

FRECHETTE: I'm not a gambling woman, that's the answer.

PISIK: Are you optimistic though?

FRECHETTE: I think there's a lot of people working very, very hard to make that happen and I hope very much that it does happen because the Organization needs the full engagement of the United States and I think it needs a United States that is not only a full member in political terms but in terms of meeting its commitment. And as I say I'm encouraged by the amount of effort that is going into making sure that we gradually get out of this problem.

BONE: I wanted to ask you about the UN's efforts to increase the representation of women in the top ranks. This is something that's been going on as a stated policy since Boutrous Ghali's time. Five or ten years ago, he stated that he wanted to have half of the top ranks filled by women. Fair enough. But it seems to me that we are sliding back rather than going forward and you, of course, are the most senior woman. What's been done to address that? There's an open Under-Secretary-General job in peacekeeping now. We hear all that the candidates are men. What's the problem? Why can't we get women to do these kinds of jobs?

FRECHETTE: Well, first of all, I am not sure that I would subscribe to your analysis that we're regressing. I think under Kofi Annan the number of women occupying senior posts has increased significantly. There's now six of us around the management table. It's far from perfect but I would point out that it's better than most of our Member States themselves.

BONE: But we don't have any Under-Secretary-General women which we used to have do. Do we have any Under-Secretary-General women in New York?

FRECHETTE: We did have I know. I don't who this was. She was Under-Secretary. We had in Public Information a Canadian ....

BONE: Madame Sevigny, but she's not there anymore.

FRECHETTE: No, she's not there anymore. It certainly is my hope that we will have more women at the Under-Secretary rank. Right now – well, we do have women at the Under-Secretary rank, of course, with Mary Robinson and Catherine Bertini and Carol

Bellamy and Sadako Ogata ...

LITTLEJOHNS: And Dr. Brundtland at the World Health Organization.

FRECHETTE: And of course, Dr. Brundtland in the World Health Organization. It's quite a ....

BONE: I'm talking about the Headquarters. The stated goal was that Headquarters was to increase to half the senior ranks and yet when these jobs come up, these top jobs, they're basically filled, these patronage jobs, with men being put in by the major powers.

FRECHETTE: Well, I would not like to suggest that by definition men are less qualified than women or that the women came in as patronage.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Fréchette on that note, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**.

Our guest has been Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. She was interviewed by Betsy Pisik of *The Washington Times* and James Bone of *The Times of London*.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle.**

ANNOUNCER: Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to **World Chronicle**, United Nations, Room S-827L, New York, N.Y., 10017.

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